

To Senators and Representatives of the Connecticut General Assembly:

I wish to support the succinct case Berkshire Regional Planning Commission director Nat Karns has put forth for improved north-south rail capability in Litchfield and Berkshire counties. He urges enactment of H.B. 6343, and so do I.

I write from Pittsfield as a former Torrington resident, a retired career journalist and one concerned for my children's and their children's generations in a changing world -- one in which rail should play a far greater role than it does now. In part this is because the especially livable cities, towns and regions will be more walkable and bike-able and cars will play a smaller role than they do today, even in tourism.

I haven't often visited Torrington or Winsted since working intermittently in Litchfield County as a reporter, photographer and editor for The Torrington Register (and later the Register Citizen) from the late 1960s to the early 1990s. I could rhapsodize about both cities and their residents of that era even though economic decline was under way.

I can only imagine their economies today, guessing they're no closer to what they were in the 1960s than Pittsfield's and Berkshire County's are.

Of course there are positive changes on both sides of the border: a cleaner environment, for example, and new, smaller enterprises that didn't exist before. But brain and wealth drain along with general population reduction are part of the picture now in Pittsfield.

In a less dysfunctional world increased rail will and should be a bigger part of the transport mix. This includes two counties whose linked prospects mean that one's success can help the other's. You are presented with an opportunity to bolster a positive trend. I hope you take it.

Contact me at 413-442-9058 or mark@berkshire.net for any related reason.

Thank you.

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